



“A Painful Remembrance”

1924-2004: The Eightieth Anniversary of the Calendar Reform

A Miracle of the Holy Great Martyr George

The Sacred Struggle Receives Acknowledgment from Heaven*

Stirring Pages from the Life of the Confessor-Hierarch,
Metropolitan Chrysostomos of Florina

The ever-memorable Metropolitan Chrysostomos was confined at the Holy Monastery of Olympos until October of 1935,¹ when through the good offices of the then Governor, the late G. Kondylis, he returned to Athens.

However, he did not remain in Athens for long, because the godly zeal for the peace and unity of the Church that consumed his heart prompted him to undertake a journey to Jerusalem, and from there to Damascus, to meet and confer with the Primates of the Eastern Patriarchates. Hence, he departed from Athens at the beginning of December of that year, arriving in Jerusalem in mid-winter. Both of the Patriarchs² welcomed the ever-memorable Hierarch, vindicating his endeavors and sacrifices and promising their support in convoking a pre-synodal conference, or a major Orthodox synod, to resolve certain outstanding ecclesiastical questions, chief among which was that of the Festal Calendar.

After making preparations to return to Greece, he was hindered by the Greek Consul, who, carrying out orders given to him from

Athens, would not validate his passport; thus, he was detained there, remaining a “captive” for nearly five months.³

The Greek Consul, in accordance with his orders from Athens, fulfilled the duties of “prison guard” for Metropolitan Chrysostomos; but the Providence of God was at work to liberate the “prisoner.” Divine Providence selected as her instrument the “liberator of captives,” St. George the Wonder-worker and Trophy-bearer. Until his last breath, the unforgettable Hierarch would recount with awe this truly astounding and moving miracle of St. George.

* * *

I was distressed by my captivity, because I did not have any information about the progress of our sacred struggle, and I did not know what the outcome of my arbitrary detention in Jerusalem would be.

“Under the weight of this intense brooding, I went the following day, 23 April, to the Divine Liturgy. With sorrow and faith I begged St. George to help me: ‘O Holy George, Great Martyr of Christ, thou who art the liberator of captives and the defender of the poor, work a miracle and deliver me from this captivity!’”

On the evening of that day, while he was in his room, and before he lay down to sleep, he heard a knocking on the door of his room.

“Come in,” said the Metropolitan. At once the door opened, and a noble young man entered and said: “You are free to leave. No one will notice you.”

“Please go and get my passport validated,” the ever-memorable Hierarch implored the young man.

The young man left promptly and, when he returned a little later, told the Metropolitan: “Everything is ready.” When the Metropolitan motioned to him to offer him a reward, the young man vanished. In astonishment, the Metropolitan asked himself what this was all about. His soul, however, was full of peace and confidence.

The following day, he went again to the Church. As soon as his gaze fell upon the Icon of St. George, he remembered the vision of the previous night, because the young man in the vision was absolutely identical to the venerable figure of the Saint in the Icon. He fervently chanted the *Apolytikion* of the Saint: “As the liberator of captives and defender of the poor,....” He then said to St. George, as if conversing with his bosom friend: “St. George, I am a prisoner. Now, since you have promised that no one will notice me, I am leaving. Watch over me.”



Immediately after leaving the Church, he went to the house where he had been staying and told the landlady: “I am departing for Piræus.”

“But, Your Eminence, where will you go? Your passport has not been validated.”

“St. George will help me.”

When he reached Haifa, whence ships set sail for Piræus, he began to feel worried again, because he did not know the language and did not have anyone of his own nationality with whom he could talk. However, while walking on a hillock, he saw an unknown monk, who approached him, bowed to him, and said to him in Greek:

“Your Eminence, how may I be of service to you?”

“How may you be of service to me? I want to leave, and my passport has not been validated by the Greek Consulate.”

The monk took the passport to the ticket-counter, and although it did not have the seal of the Greek Consulate, they issued him a ticket.

Metropolitan Chrysostomos passed unobserved through all of the checkpoints and embarked on a Romanian ship bound for Piræus, where he arrived under the protection of St. George.⁴ After disembarking, he went straight to the Ministry of Religion, where the then Minister asked him in astonishment:

“How did you get here, Your Eminence?”

“On a Romanian ship,” the venerable Hierarch ingenuously replied.

The Minister’s astonishment was explained at once. The Metropolitan’s niece on his brother’s side, Melpomene Zacharia, had gone to the house of a friend, where Metropolitan Chrysanthos of Trebizond, of blessed memory,⁵ was present.

“How is your uncle doing?” asked the Metropolitan.

“He’s fine, and he’s on his way.”

“That’s impossible! He’s supposed to stay in Jerusalem.”

“But my uncle *is* coming!” And she showed him the telegram that she had received a few hours before.

Metropolitan Chrysanthos crossed himself and said:

“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs gave strict orders to the Greek Consulate in Jerusalem not to validate his passport in any way. So, how can he be coming?”

The monk who assisted the ever-memorable Metropolitan Chrysostomos was the late Hieromonk Evgenios of Jerusalem, whom the Germans executed during the Occupation because, they said, he had helped English prisoners escape to the Middle East.⁶

* Source: Ὁρθόδοξος Ἐνστασις καὶ Μαρτυρία, Nos. 18-21 (January-December 1990), pp. 174-177.

Notes

1. The Confessor-Hierarch Chrysostomos (Kavourides) of Florina (1870-1955) was exiled by the innovators to the Holy Monastery of St. Dionysios in Olympos

for joining the anti-innovationist flock of the Old Calendarists. He remained there for about three months, from June-October 1935.

- The “written disavowal” of the three Hierarchs Germanos of Demetrias, Chrysostomos of Florina, and Chrysostomos of Zakynthos “to the Ruling Synod” of the Church of Greece, entitled “Protest and Declaration,” was delivered on 14/27 May 1935 by a court notary. The “Decision of the Synodal Court of the First Instance Concerning the [Three] Hierarchs” was issued on 14 June 1935, imposing on them “the penalty of deposition from the Episcopal office, demotion to the rank of monk, five years of physical confinement in a monastery, and total deprivation of every Hierarchical title and rank”; and it appointed “monasteries for them to serve their sentences: for Germanos, the former Metropolitan of Demetrias, the Holy Monastery of Chozobotissa in Amorgos; for Chrysostomos, the former Metropolitan of Florina, the Holy Monastery of St. Dionysios (of Olympos) in the Metropolis of Kitros; and for Chrysostomos, the former Metropolitan of Zakynthos, the Holy Monastery of Rombos in the Metropolis of Akarnania” (see *Ἐκκλησία*, No. 25 [22 June 1935], pp. 193-196).

- The periodical *Ἐκκλησία* devoted numerous pages to the affair of the three Hierarchs, in eighteen issues, through November of 1935. See also Archimandrite Theokletos (Strangas), *Ἐκκλησίας Ἑλλάδος Ἱστορία ἐκ πηγῶν ἀψευδῶν (1817-1967)* [*History of the Church of Greece From Reliable Sources (1817-1967)*] (Athens: 1971), Vol. III, pp. 2035-2045 (“Hierarchs Join the Old Calendar Movement”).

- During his exile in Olympos, Metropolitan Chrysostomos finished a work consisting of eighty-seven closely-typed pages, entitled *Τὸ Ἐκκλησιαστικὸν Ἡμερολόγιον ὡς κριτήριον τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας* [*The Church Calendar as a Criterion of Orthodoxy*] (1/14 July 1935).

2. At the time, the Patriarch of Jerusalem was Timothy I (Themelis), who served from 1935-1955. Born in Samos in 1878, he was an intelligent and capable Chief Hierarch, a veteran member of the Brotherhood of the Holy Sepulcher, an erudite clergyman, and a prolific author. On 27 August 1921, he was Consecrated Archbishop of Jordan by Patriarch Damianos, assisted by Archbishops Sophronios of Gaza and Panteleimon of Neapolis, and also by the Russian Metropolitan Anastassy of Kishinev and Khotin (Bessarabia), a member of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church Abroad, who succeeded Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) as First Hierarch in 1936 (he served as First Hierarch until his repose in 1965, when he, in turn, was succeeded by Metropolitan Philaret). The Patriarch of Antioch was Alexander III (Tahan). Born in Damascus in 1869, he was an energetic Patriarch, well-versed in the Greek language, and a philhellene.

3. Metropolitan Chrysostomos, finding himself detained in Jerusalem for five months, sent to the recently enthroned Patriarch Nicholas V (Evangelides) of Alexandria, who served from 1936-1939 (born in 1876 in Ioannina; Ordained Deacon and Priest by Patriarch Photios of Alexandria; Consecrated Metropolitan of Nubia in 1918, in 1927 he became Metropolitan of Hermoupolis; distinguished for his spiritual and administrative abilities, he was a noted author), a marvelous nine-page letter (to April 1936), which demonstrates the anguished conscience of this genuine Hierarch

and Pastor. One marvels, in this letter, at the beauty of its diction, the nobility of the writer, and the candor with which he confesses the Faith.

• We draw the reader's attention to one particular paragraph of this splendid letter, which adorns the golden pages of the martyric life of this Confessor and Hierarchy:

“Let Your Beatitude not suppose that the expression of this reasonable doubt implies any disrespect towards your venerable person, for the writer of this letter, in spite of his being unjustly condemned by the Greek State to the ultimate ecclesiastical punishment for adhering steadfastly to the principles of Orthodoxy, and in spite of his being recently—and unfraternally—declared *persona non grata* by the former *locum tenens*, Metropolitan Theophanes of Tripoli, who forbade him to disembark from a steamship in Alexandria, has been accustomed from his youth to respect those who worthily represent the spirit and the Divine authority of the Orthodox Church”

(For this letter of Metropolitan Chrysostomos, see *Υπομνήματα-Ἐπιστολαὶ-Ἀπολογία ἐν σχέσει πρὸς τὸ Ἰουλιανὸν Ἐκκλησιαστικὸν Ἡμερολόγιον* [*Memoranda, Letters, and Apologies in Relation to the Julian Ecclesiastical Calendar*] [Athens: 1941], where the date of the letter is given as 10 April 1935. This is obviously a typographical error, since Nicholas V was elected on 11 February 1936, when Metropolitan Chrysostomos was in Jerusalem),

4. In the Life of the Holy Great Martyr George, two similarly astonishing miracles are mentioned, which involve St. George miraculously conveying two captives to their homes: “The miraculous conveyance of the youth George to his home” and “The miraculous return of the widow's son” (see Abbot Victor Matthaïou, *Μέγας Συναξαριστὴς τῆς Ὁρθοδόξου Ἐκκλησίας* [*The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*] [Athens: 1968], 3rd ed., Vol. IV, pp. 480-484).

5. Chrysanthos (Philippides), Metropolitan of Trebizond from 1913-1938. Born in Komotene, Thrace, in 1881; Archbishop of Athens from 1938-1941, he was a prolific author, an academic, and a prominent and active nationalist. He reposed on 28 September 1949.

6. For this great miracle of the Holy Great Martyr George, see Elias Angelopoulos and Dionysios Batistatos, *Μητροπολίτης πρ. Φλωρίνης Χρυσόστομος Καβουρίδης (Ἀγωνιστὴς τῆς Ὁρθοδοξίας καὶ τοῦ Ἔθνους* [*Chrysostomos Kavourides, Former Metropolitan of Florina: A Struggler for Orthodoxy and the Nation*] (Athens: 1981), pp. 21-25.